Business Analyst Job Description

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| Description | The business analyst is the individual who has the primary responsibility to elicit, analyze, validate, specify, verify, and manage the real needs of the project stakeholders, including customers and end users. The business analyst is also known as a requirements analyst, requirements engineer, requirements manager, system analyst, or simply analyst. The BA serves as the conduit between the customer community and the software development team through which requirements flow.  A BA is involved at some level throughout the entire software development life cycle. Upon establishment of the requirements baseline, the focus is shifted towards the management of the requirements set and verifying their satisfaction.  The business analysis function is a project role, not necessarily a job title. The role may be performed by a dedicated BA or split among multiple team members who have other primary job functions, such as a project manager, product manager, or developer. The BA is responsible for seeing that the tasks are performed properly. | |
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| Skills Needed | * Listening skills, to understand what people say and to detect what they might be hesitant to say. * Interviewing and questioning skills, to talk with individuals and groups about their needs and ask the right questions to surface essential requirements information. * Thinking on your feet, to go beyond planned questions and respond to whatever input you hear from the people you are interviewing. * Analytical skills, to critically evaluate the information gathered from multiple sources, reconcile conflicts, decompose high-level information into details, abstract up from low-level information to a more general understanding, distinguish presented user requests from the underlying true needs, and distinguish solution ideas from requirements. * Systems thinking skills, to be able to see the interactions and relationships between the people, processes, and technology involved in an environment. * Learning skills, to pick up new information quickly. * Facilitation skills, to lead requirements elicitation workshops. * Leadership skills, to create a collaborative environment and influence people to move toward a common goal. * Observational skills, to validate data obtained via other techniques and expose new areas for elicitation. * Communication skills, to communicate information effectively and inappropriate forms to customers, marketing, managers, and technical staff. * Organizational skills, to work with the vast array of information gathered during elicitation and analysis and to cope with rapidly changing information. * Modeling skills, to represent requirements information in graphical forms that augment textual representations in natural language, including using modeling languages already established in the development organization. * Interpersonal skills, to help negotiate priorities and to resolve conflicts among project stakeholders (such as customers, product management, and engineering). * Creativity, to propose requirements that no one even imagined. | |
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| Knowledge Needed | * An understanding of contemporary requirements elicitation, analysis, specification, validation, and management practices and the ability to apply them in practice. * Familiarity with contemporary requirements engineering books and resources. * An understanding of how to practice requirements engineering according to several software development life cycles in a team environment. * Knowledge of product management concepts and how enterprise software products are positioned and developed. * Knowledge of existing tools for requirements development and requirements management to be able to choose appropriate tools for a given project and environment. * Application domain knowledge is a plus, to have credibility with user representatives and be able to work effectively with them. | |
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| Typical Responsibilities | * Work with the product manager or project sponsor to document the project’s business requirements. * Identify project stakeholders and user classes. Document user class characteristics. Identify appropriate representatives for each user class and negotiate their responsibilities. * Elicit requirements using interviews, document analysis, requirements workshops, storyboards, surveys, site visits, business process analysis, use cases or user stories, scenarios, event lists, competitive product analysis, task and workflow analysis. * Write requirements specifications according to standard templates, using natural language simply, clearly, unambiguously, and concisely. * Decompose high-level business and user requirements into functional requirements, specified in an appropriate level of detail and in appropriate forms suitable for use by those must base their work on the requirements. * Specify quality attributes, external interfaces, and constraints. * Represent requirements using alternative views, such as visual analysis models (diagrams), prototypes, or simulations, where appropriate. * Lead requirements analysis and verification, ensuring that requirement statements are complete, consistent, concise, comprehensible, traceable, feasible, unambiguous, and verifiable, and that they conform to standards. * Lead requirements validation activities to confirm that a solution based on the requirements would meet customer needs and achieve the business objectives. * Lead and facilitate ongoing requirements prioritization. * Participate in peer reviews and inspections of requirements documents. Participate in peer reviews of work products derived from requirements specifications to ensure that the requirements were interpreted correctly. * Enter, manipulate, and report on requirements stored in a requirements management tool. Define requirement attributes and use them throughout the project. * Manage the creation and use of requirements trace information. * Track requirements status throughout the project. * Manage changes to baselined requirements through effective and appropriate application of change control processes and tools. * Establish and implement effective requirements practices, including the continuous improvement of a requirements process. Assist with the development of the organization’s requirements engineering policies, procedures, and tools. * Implement ways to reuse requirements across projects. * Identify ways to assist product management in product planning through requirements development and analysis. Propose new product features and updates. | |
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| Measures of Performance | * Evaluation from product and project management on overall product quality and effectiveness in the marketplace of the requirements after the product has been developed. * Feedback from key customer or marketing representatives on the way in which the requirements engineering process was conducted. * Customer satisfaction measures. * Satisfying or exceeding requirements development schedules, resource constraints, and quality goals. * Control of requirements creep attributable to missed requirements and leakage of “unofficial” requirements into the project. | |
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| References | Ferdinandi, Patricia L. *A Requirements Pattern: Succeeding in the Internet Economy*. Boston, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 2002 (Chapter 8).  Wiegers, Karl, and Joy Beatty. *Software Requirements, 3rd Edition*. Redmond, Wash.: Microsoft Press, 2013 (Chapter 4). | |
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**Usage Notes:**

* The users of this generic job description will need to modify some of the terminology to reflect their specific environment. For example, IT development teams sometimes refer to the business analyst role as a “requirements analyst,” and they typically don’t have a “product management” role.
* Business analysts sometimes are responsible for analyzing and improving an organization’s business processes, which is not included in this description.
* Each team that uses this job description needs to weight the various skills and knowledge that are pertinent for their job. Certain skills listed might be critical for one BA job but not another.
* Each person who is considering hiring an individual to be a business analyst needs to consider which of these skills are intrinsic in the way the individual works (e.g., analytical and interpersonal skills) and which can be learned (e.g., facilitation and listening skills).